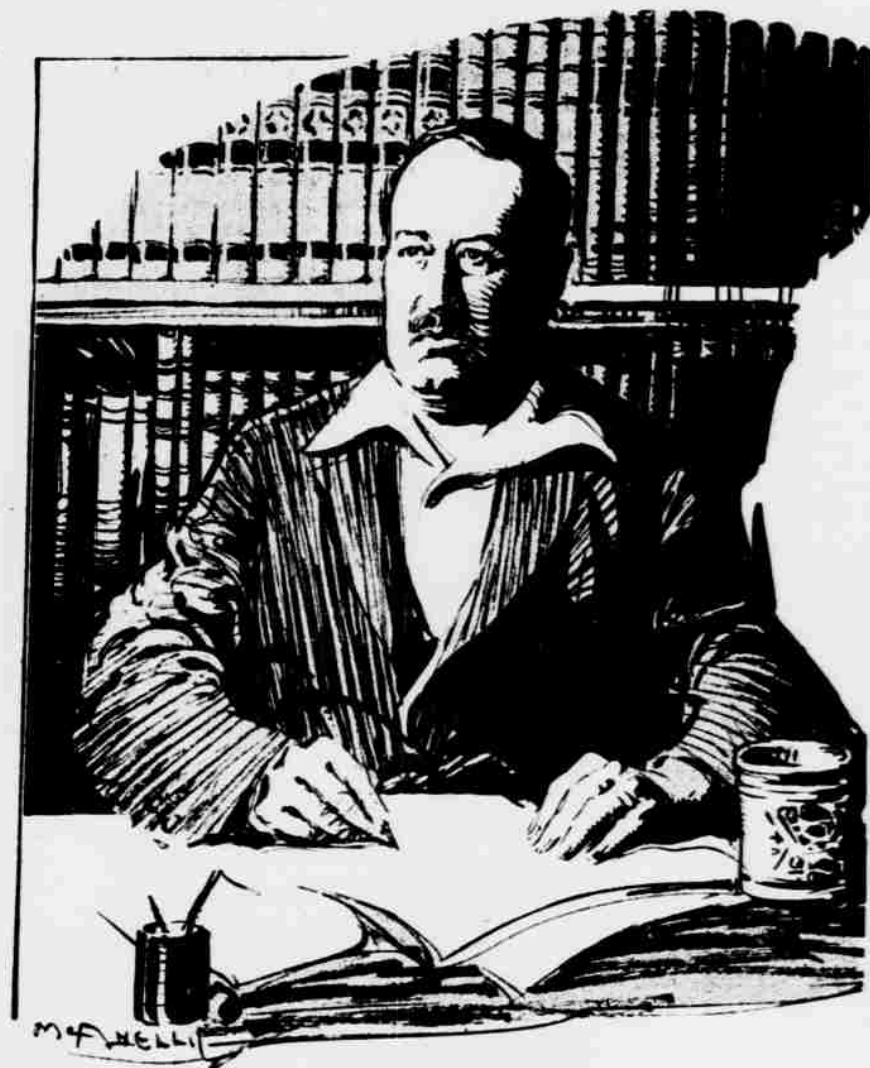


"The Shadow of the Cathedral"



VINCENT BLASCO IBANEZ.

From a photograph, by courtesy of the "Bookman" magazine.

By GRANT M. OVERTON.

FROM the standpoint of American readers *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* is the best work to date of the Spanish novelist, Vicente Blasco Ibañez. Whether *Mare Nostrum* (Our Sea), his forthcoming tale of German submarines in the Mediterranean, will be as interesting remains to be seen. But *The Four Horsemen* is of much more interest to us than *The Shadow of the Cathedral*.

It is to be regretted that the thousands who have made Ibañez's acquaintance through *The Four Horsemen* should not

continue it by reading, in a fresh publication, his pageant of the bullring done into English under the title *Blood and Sand* (*Sangre y Arena*). Let us earnestly counsel those who read *The Four Horsemen* to look up *Blood and Sand*.

For the best way to make the acquaintance of such a writer as Ibañez—or Conrad, or Hardy, or Flaubert, or Tolstoy—is by reading first that one of his books which has the widest appeal, the next best next, and so on, establishing what the doctors call a "toleration" of the fare as easily as possible. And this because there is always something bitterish and medicinal in the writings of these full strength men; always a certain "toleration" has to be established.

In the introduction which he has written for this new edition of *La Catedral* Mr. W. D. Howells speaks with his invariable honesty on this point. "*Blood and Sand* is a book of unexampled force and in that sort must be reckoned the greatest novel of the author, who has neglected no phase of his varied scene." And with equally admirable candor he says later of *The Shadow of the Cathedral*: "Whoever can hold on to the end of it—" There you have the whole problem in a nutshell. The book, superb as it is in certain ways, requires a reader who will hold on like grim death.

"Whoever can hold on to the end of it will find his reward in the full enjoyment of that 'noble terror' which high tragedy alone can give," to finish Mr. Howells's sentence. And he does not exaggerate a particle.

At Toledo stands the cathedral, the Holy Metropolitan Church of all the Spains. All the story of *The Shadow of the Cathedral* takes place within the cathedral grounds. The adventures of Gabriel Luna outside them are sketched for us; his only adventure within them is the adventure of dying. Pages of conversation, disquisition, in which Ibañez contrives to bring the whole history of Spain and the whole picture of her economic and social condition within the walls of a single fane. It is a masterpiece of art. Action there is none, until the very end. Interest? That depends on how much interest Spain, past and present, holds for you. If for you, as for this writer, Spain is the most fascinating corner of the earth, *The Shadow of the Cathedral* becomes a marvellous book. The vast majority will find it unreadable.

The book is thoroughly anti-ecclesiastical and is on the Catholic Index. It is not a book for novel readers but for lovers of history and, in its mordant conclusion, for lovers of tragedy and irony. Unless you are fond of reflective writing, a moralist, an ironist, interested in political and social and economic ideas, keep away from it. Read *Blood and Sand* instead! Or wait for *Mare Nostrum*.

THE SHADOW OF THE CATHEDRAL.
By VICENTE BLASCO IBANEZ. E. P. Dutton & Co. \$1.90.

"Tam o' the Scoots"

WHATEVER you don't read among the new books make a point of reading Edgar Wallace's short novel, *Tam o' the Scoots*. Don't put it off. Get it, borrow it—but get it. If you steal it you can make restitution afterward.

It's the story of an airman, a Scot from Glasgow. Tam McTavish began the war as the perfect slacker—from military service at least. The shipyards for him. One day he was sent on a job to an airdrome workshop. Tam was a wizard with machinery. He worked all day on an airplane engine and when he went home his were the long, long thoughts.

He exhibited sheer genius in flying no doubt, though half his success lay in his care on the ground, tinkering his own engine and nursing his own gun. He was a man of the workman "class." Very slack on military discipline. Read nothing but dime novels. Invariably related air exploits in the language of *Deadwood Dick* with Scotch trimmings. Modest, too; always suppressed the really interesting part of the story. Wrote happy verse on occasion. Couldn't be trusted when cigars were by. Understood the "Hoon." As Tam said:

"He goes in for frightfulness because he's afraid of frightfulness. He bombs little toons because he's scared of his ain little toons bein' bombed. . . . Ye can always scare a Hoon—that's ma theory, sir-r."

There are ten chapters which touch all

the high spots in Tam's career from the time he entered the "Royal Flying Corp" to the time when he went back to England—beg pardon, Scotland!—on convalescent leave brightened by a complete understanding with a young woman and saddened by—

"The big feller, the principal doctor," said Tam, "said I might smoke a wee seegair, and, believe me, Capt. Blackie, sir-r, when I looked in ma pouch there wasna a single—"

Instead of saying "Liar!" Blackie "took his cigar case from his pocket, opened and extended it.

"Tam," he said, "you're nearly well."

All of which gives no just idea of the fun, the excitement and the delight of this book, matter for reading at a single sitting if you can. How Tam brought down the famous Müller, how he punished Von Mahl, who fought foully; how he bombed the—. But that mustn't be given away here. How he does this and that, we were going to say, makes splendid reading because it is written without an unnecessary word in a style that is simplicity itself.

There is not a single place where Mr. Wallace strains for effect and his effortless telling is comparable with the work of a French fictioneer—a first class French fictioneer. The dialect will bother no one, thanks to Mr. Wallace's wise simplification of it.

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